

Sierra Leone's Premier Hints At

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General Elections

Wants A Constitution, But Is Not As Certain On Presidency

By RUSSELL WARREN HOWE
Sun Staff Correspondent

Freetown, Sierra Leone—The Sierra Leonean premier, Siaka Stevens, hinted here in an interview that he would soon challenge to a general election opponents who had caused disturbances in the country. He said he wanted Sierra Leone—a "dominion," like Canada—to have a republican constitution "soon," but not necessarily with an executive presidency.

Other points Mr. Stevens made were:

1. "Unfortunate lapses" by the United States had "made us imagine a lot of things" implying American support for the alleged leaders of an abortive coup in October.

2.—He blamed the recent disturbances on a haughty former World Health Office official, Dr. John Karefa-Smart, now jailed.

3.—The Privogative of Mercy Committee may consider the cases of seven civilians condemned for treasonous participation in the 1967 military coup, if their court appeals fail.

4.—A "dialogue" between black Africa and the white regime in South Africa would be easier if the chief dialogue exponent, Malawian President H. Kamuzu Banda, did less talking.

Mr. Stevens, an athletic 66, spoke at length about riots sparked by opponents of his party's demand that the dominion constitution, making Elizabeth II head of state, be replaced.

Party Banned

Elections are not due until 1972, but a major constitutional change requires ratification by a new parliament. Elections would require lifting current "state of emergency" regulations, and possibly the release of three ex-ministers and two wealthy doctors (including Karefa-Smart) who led the banned United Democratic party.

The political choice would be between retaining the status quo or having either an "American" executive presidency, a "Ghananian" president with "checking" powers or an "Indian" ceremonial presidency.

Critics of Mr. Stevens, a burly, imposing former labor leader, have accused him of wanting excessive powers and aiming to draw Sierra Leone away from the West—although observers here can see no evidence of this in his foreign policy.

Election Alliance

The banned United Democrats and the "official" opposition, the Sierra Leone People's party, may make an election alliance to fight for the status quo and are expected to cut into the government's 54-13 majority.

The UDP is mainly composed of Freetown intellectuals, with some hometown support for Dr. Karefa-Smart in Tonkolili. Diplomats think Mr. Stevens was surprised at the speed with which agitation peaked (Mr. Stevens had to return prematurely from an official visit to Zambia), but others think he shrewdly gave the intellectuals a free rein, correctly assuming they would use violence and force a crackdown.

Increase Powers

Looking confident and relaxed, Premier Stevens paused to reflect when asked if he expected a republican constitution to increase his present executive powers.

"Only in the opposition's imagination," he said. His All People's Congress had "had a mini-convention some time ago, and one section of the party—the so-called 'eastern bloc' from Kono—wanted a republican constitution with an executive presidency at once."

Relations with the United States have been strained by the routine activities of an embassy political officer and an Agency for International Development line of credit for buying rice. What happened was this:

The Sierra Leone Rice Corporation's general manager, "Shot" Macaulay, asked for use of an AID credit September 25. Ten days later he stipulated the figure—\$139,000. Three days after that Mr. Macaulay's request went off to Washington in the embassy pouch. The Ministry of Agriculture asked for bids: a week later, Mr. Macau-

lay received a letter from the International Proteins Corporation of New Jersey asking for details about quality.

One of Mr. Macaulay's staff leaked the Proteins Corporation letter to a local paper, *Unity*, insisting that the rice corporation had not initiated a request. The line of thought apparently was that Dr. Karefa-Smart must have ordered the rice to be distributed as manna after seizing power. The doctor is American-trained and has an American wife. Obviously the U.S. Embassy was backing his campaign.

A day or so later Mark Colby, the political second secretary, was seen calling on Maj. Yanki Sisay an Army intelligence officer, at nine in the morning. Mr. Colby was expelled and Major Sisay retired. Mobs stoned the embassy.

Asked if he thought the U.S. was pro-opposition, Mr. Stevens said: "It's difficult to make a categoric statement. Some sections of the party feel strongly, but I don't think our relations with the U.S. will suffer. It's a pity Ambassador [Robert G.] Miner is in Washington just now. We've always gotten along very well. But there have been one or two lapses which have been very unfortunate . . . Mr. Colby's behavior made us imagine a lot of things."

A recent government decision to drop treason charges against Paramount Chief Ella Gulama has sparked hopes that civilians involved in the anti-Stevens coup of 1967 may be given amnesty. Six officers and five civilians were sentenced to death, and two civilians to imprisonment. Sir Albert Margai, the ex-premier and highest civilian conspirator, was allowed to go into exile in London.

Mr. Stevens said: "These cases are on appeal and if they lose I understand they'll go to

the [British] Privy Council. If they lose there, there is a Prerogative of Mercy Committee."

The premier denied a U.S. press report that he was purging the Army and government of Temne tribesmen and holding 100 prisoners without charges.

Sierra Leone Dismisses U.S. Diplomatic Official

By RUSSELL WARREN HOWE

Sun Staff Correspondent

Dakar, Senegal, Oct. 15—Mark Colby, second secretary at the United States Embassy in Freetown, Sierra Leone, has been expelled, it was learned here today. No reason was given but Sierra Leonean sources say

Mr. Colby was alleged to have been friendly with one of the six officers arrested yesterday and accused of plotting to overthrow the government of Premier Siaka Stevens.

The government announced discovery of a plot last Friday and declared a state of emergency.

Premier Stevens, a 65-year-old labor leader, has ordered the arrest of over 30 civilians, mostly members of the United Democratic party, a small intellectual movement banned last week, diplomatic sources here say.

The premier returned hurriedly from the non-aligned summit conference in Lusaka, Zambia, last month when two of his ministers, Dr. Mohammed Forna and Mohammed Bash-Taqi, resigned and founded the United Democratic party.

They were joined by a former information minister, Ibrahim Bash-Taqi, Mohammed's brother; Dr. Sarif Easmon and Dr. John Karefa-Smarit, who was the nation's first foreign minister after independence in 1961. All five are among those arrested.

The United Democrats, a middle-class group, were not expected by observers to have

much influence outside the capital, Freetown. Dr. Karefa-Smarit, a physician and a disappointed candidate for the post of governor-general, is a haughty figure who has already belonged to three political parties.

His colleague, Dr. Easmon is regarded as a wealthy maverick. Both have made tasteless public jokes about Premier Stevens's limited education. The government alleges that the Forna group allied itself to discontented officers to try to seize power by force.

Military seizures of power are especially unpopular in Sierra Leone. A group of officers who seized power in 1967 and were later arrested by enlisted men are now under sentence of death.

The crisis over Premier Stevens' proposal to convert the Canada-like dominion into a republic with a strong executive presidency is expected to revive the fortunes of the main opposition group, the Sierra Leone Peoples' party, which held power from 1961 to 1967.

The Peoples party leader, former premier Sir Albert (Big Al) Margai lives in exile in London. Sir Albert is the half-brother of the country's first prime minister, the late Sir Milton Margai.

Sierra Leone Orders U.S. Envoy to Leave

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Reuters

FREETOWN, Oct. 13 — The Sierra Leone government tonight ordered a United States embassy official to leave the country immediately.

The government also removed two senior army officers from service.

The American diplomat was identified as Mark T. Colby, second secretary (political and labor) at the embassy here.

No reasons were given for the moves, but reliable sources said the orders followed an alleged abortive coup Friday after Premier Siaka Stevens had announced tough action to curb violence and launched an army-police operation.